

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR PAID ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS

Recruitment and Retentions Strategies for Paid On-Call Firefighters

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### **CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

### Abstract

The problem is the City of Onalaska Fire Department (OFD) is experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining its paid on-call firefighters. The purpose of this research was to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in departments comparable to Onalaska's. A descriptive research method was used to answer the following research questions: a) What processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on call firefighters?, b) What types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on call members to remain active on a long term basis?, c) What have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members?

The procedures for this research included reviewing literature published on the issue of recruitment and retention. The researcher collected data by designing a feedback instrument and distributing it to local departments comparable to OFD. A second feedback instrument was created and distributed to the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO) to collect and review data on a national level to compare and contrast with data collected locally.

Results from the research identified implementation of recruitment teams to market departments by using media and other community events to target new recruits. Departments are creating retirement/benefit packages as a retention tool. Other creative methods for retaining volunteers included: property tax breaks, clothing allowances, hourly pay structures, and deferred compensation programs. Recommendations include developing a recruitment and retention team concept, review current time demands for training and education, create a benefit package for paid on-call (POC), and plan fun activities to recognize family members as part of the team.

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## Introduction

According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA, 2007), figures in 2003 revealed the nation's volunteer firefighter force accounts for 73 percent or just over 800,050 firefighters. This figure as compared to 897,750 in 1984 supports a growing concern with the issue of recruitment and retention of the nation's volunteer/paid on-call (POC) firefighters.

The problem is the Onalaska Fire Department (OFD) is experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining its POC firefighters. The purpose of this research is to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in departments comparable to Onalaska's. The author will use the descriptive research method to identify critical strategies for a plan to recruit and retain its POC firefighters. The research approach will include reviewing published literature and collecting data from comparable departments on the subject of recruitment and retention to answer the following research questions: a) What processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on-call firefighters?, b) What types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on-call members to remain active on a long term basis?, c) What have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members?

## Background & Significance

OFD was established in 1894 as a volunteer fire company. The first recorded fire calls ranged from one in 1900 to 18 in 1934. The department consisted of a fire chief, three elected fire officials, and 20 members. During that time the volunteer firefighters were paid a wage of \$2.00 per fire call. The firefighters hosted ice cream socials and dances to raise money to help fund their budget. For a short period of time they even owned and operated a public ice skating rink for their community (cityofonalaska.com, 2012).

Today, OFD responds out of one station located just a block east of the original fire station of 1894. The current station was part of a new public safety /city hall remodel that was built in 2000, encompassing all city government entities under one roof. OFD is currently staffed with 33 members and classified as a combination department with full-time (FT) and paid on-call (POC) firefighters. The FT staff consists of a Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, and three shifts, with a Lieutenant / Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and two Firefighter / EMTs providing coverage 24-hours a day, seven days a week. OFD's POC staff include an administrative assistant (15-hours per week) and 20 POC Firefighter / EMTs. In 2011 OFD responded to 1,113 emergency medical service (EMS) non-transport responses and 408 fire responses. These totals set a new record for OFD: up three percent for EMS and nine percent for fire responses as compared to 2010. From 2002 through 2011 emergency responses increased by 39%. OFD has the second busiest station in LaCrosse County and continues to operate with a minimum staffing of two FT firefighters. The POC staffing is currently at 20 active with five vacancies. In addition to being paged out for 408 fire responses, the POC were also dispatched 115 times in 2011 to cover a second medical call or to back-fill the station when the FT firefighters were out of the service area.

OFD is also very active in a variety of community risk reduction programs. All OFD members are encouraged to participate when they can in this important job performance requirement (JPR). Some of the programs include: quarterly blood pressure and safety programs for senior citizens at independent living complexes, National Fire Prevention Week safety programs for preschool through fourth grade, fire department open house/health and safety expo, safety days at area retail or commercial properties, 5K run/walk fundraiser, MDA Fill The Boot campaign, and other public appearances and fundraisers.

OFD has the challenge of maintaining a balance between its FT and POC firefighters. The level of education and training requirements between the FT and POC are very comparable. OFD takes pride in knowing the firefighters are trained to the same level to ensure they function smoothly and efficiently as one team on an incident. With limited FT staffing OFD cannot afford to have a double standard, especially when it comes to operations and safety on the fire ground. During the first year a new POC firefighter will be required to complete Entry Level Firefighter (ELF) parts one and two, 60-hours, and Entry Level Driver Operator, 30- hours (WTCS, 2010). Additional requirements include: ICS 100, 200, and 700. By the end of the second year the firefighter is required, at a minimum, to have successfully completed the EMT certification course 180-hours (WTC, 2012). In addition to the certification requirements, all firefighters are required to attend monthly meetings and training drills. OFD will invest thousands of dollars into training and educating each new POC firefighter. After the first two-year requirements are met, the new member is classified by OFD as a level one firefighter. He or she may pursue additional education and training to move to level two and eventually level three if that path is chosen. Each new level also includes an increase in the hourly wage paid to the POC member. Currently first year probationary firefighters are paid \$9.00 per hour with the top pay (level 3) at \$12.00 per hour. This hourly wage is paid anytime a firefighter responds for an emergency, training, public education, or other department function approved by the Fire Chief or Assistant Chief.

In 2012 OFD was held to a zero percent increase in its operating expenses and POC wages. With new software contracts and other operating expenses increasing; training and education dollars have been taking the biggest hit. OFD's administration is challenged to work with a shrinking budget that never really received sufficient funding, as the department was transitioning from an all-volunteer to a combination department in the early 1990s. OFD cannot

afford to lose its new members within the first two – five years after investing so much time and money into them. When someone is having their worse day in our community, they always rely on the professional POC firefighters to respond.

Onalaska's "good old boys" of the early 1900s volunteer fire company are long gone and have paved the way for the 21<sup>st</sup> century firefighters. Being an active POC firefighter on OFD's team requires hundreds of hours annually, which presents a difficult challenge in today's society. Recruitment has become difficult in identifying a process of how to target and seek out competent and dependable POC firefighters. Once the commitment is made and the new recruit and city have invested valuable time and money together, what retention system is out there to encourage a long-term relationship between OFD and the new POC firefighter?

This Applied Research Paper (ARP) for the Executive Leadership (EL) course is linked to the enabling objective "Complete planning for an influence attempt" (NFA, 2011, p. SM 11-1). The goal of this research paper is to identify creative strategies to target and influence competent and dependable citizens to join OFD's team of POC firefighters. This planning process must also include a key component or strategy that will insure retention of OFD's most valuable resource, its firefighters.

There is an established relationship with this ARP and the United States Fire Administrations (USFA) operational objective, "To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (NFA, 2008, p. II-2). With the decrease in budget dollars, it will be critical for OFD to implement a plan to recruit and retain its POC firefighters. The cost of training one POC firefighter and then losing him/her within a few years is not an efficient and effective use of tax payer's dollars.



### Literature Review

The literature review for this Applied Research Project (ARP) supports the foundation for OFD's organizational problem. The researcher examined literature published by others on the subject of recruitment and retention of volunteer and POC firefighters.

Gasaway (2004) shares a conversation he had with some fire chiefs at a volunteer and combination fire department symposium on the challenges of recruiting quality firefighter candidates. One of the chiefs said his city manager told him if someone wanted to join the volunteer fire department then nothing should stand in his or her way. Gasaway expressed his concerns that lower standards will bring in the wrong people and jeopardize the talented and motivated professionals that are currently on the department. Consideration of the safety risks to current members and the community they are responsible for protecting must also be considered. He feels that a department would be far better with ten top quality members than having five quality members and 25 misfits. Gasaway offers the following suggestions for attracting quality members:

- Send a strong recruitment message; let them know that you are interested in candidates that are really interested in being a firefighter.
- Standards should be set high and not lowered. Recruiting the wrong people will create endless problems for the fire chief.
- Get rid of dead weight, if someone can't do the work than simply cut him or her and move on.
- Finally Gasaway feels the city manager needs to be educated on the responsibility and trust that is expected of each and every firefighter.

The City of Pierre, South Dakota published a report *Recruitment Program* in February 2010. According to Pierre (2010), an aggressive recruitment campaign was launched to address the tremendous challenges they are facing with recruiting new volunteer firefighters. At full-strength the department is authorized 75 firefighters but only has 68 of those positions filled. Their advertising campaign includes billboard advertisements, public service announcements, radio and television advertisements, along with manning booths at home shows and sporting events. One of their biggest discoveries in recruiting new members is to let them know up-front the required training and education hours along with other fire department requirements. They feel being honest and up-front during the recruitment process is important to flush out the semi-interested, leaving only the most serious candidates. As for the retention of members, 95% of the members stay on the department for five years or more. Pierre (2010) offers a retention program for their members which include:

- Department pays for annual physicals
- \$600.00 per year deferred comp program must have a minimum of five years vested
- Free YMCA and aquatic center memberships
- \$65,000 life insurance policy
- Retail store discounts
- Department pays for all firefighter/EMT training
- Family activities (picnics, fishing, family fun night, awards banquet, sponsored dinners quarterly)

According to Pierre (2010), the listed benefits above have worked for this department, but they are always looking for new ideas to improve this program.

Carter (2009) describes the lack of volunteer firefighters as a crisis, with too few joining, and those that do are not staying. Fire departments need to attack this crisis head-on to find out what we are doing right in our organization, and what needs to be corrected. Carter explains that after conducting years of research, he has come to the conclusion that the concept of volunteerism for a community is a lost tradition. Recruitment and retention are viewed by Carter to be two separate issues that must be attacked together. He recommends that first we fix any problems internally in our department, before we look at recruiting new members. According to Carter (2009), it would be a waste of time to have an excellent recruitment program only to learn that internal problems are driving new recruits away. Carter's research has identified key problem areas he feels must be addressed in order to have a successful fire department.

- Leadership issues; these positions can create a positive or negative experience for the members. Some leaders tend to play favorites with some members and punish others that they do not like to work with. It is critical to recognize these types of leadership issues and create a mentoring program to give future officers the tools to be a qualified leader.
- Economic issues are also a factor with both parents working and sharing responsibilities in the home with raising a family. Affordable housing may also be a contributing factor.
- Time demands of the job may be more than the new recruit can handle. Perhaps the job in itself was not what the new recruit thought it would be like.
- Some departments conduct physical fitness drills which can become a retention issue, especially with aging members who may feel they no longer can do the job.

Probably one of the most important issues is for the chief to identify and establish a balance within the organization that works for his or her department. Carter recommends forming a committee of seven to nine members to study the internal issues within the department and then

look at the external (environmental) issues. This team should work under the direction of a recruitment and retention officer to recommend strategies based on their study of the fire department.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) published a document titled *Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services*, (USFA, 2007). According to the document, in 2003 the nation's volunteer firefighter force accounted for 73 percent or just over 800,050 firefighters. In 1984, the number of volunteer firefighters reached a high of 897,750. Although the trend of declining volunteers in the fire service is alarming, the ideas and practices identified in this document can help departments reverse this trend. To prevent being forced to hire career firefighters, departments have to understand and deal with the challenges that volunteers are facing in today's world. This document identifies the need to focus on what the recruitment and retention problems are so a solution can be created. According to USFA (2007), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003) cites the lack of time as the number one reason for not volunteering. Data from a study at St. Joseph's University in 2004 indicated 92.3 percent of volunteers leave the organization because they have no time to volunteer. Completing the top four on the list were: conflicts in the organization (47.8%), organizational leadership created an adverse atmosphere (46.7%), and too much training (45.6%). These problems were found throughout the 50 states and not necessarily in one specific area of the country (P.6).

Retirement plans are identified in this document as being one of the most important and growing incentives for volunteers. With the number of private and public employers reducing pension plans, implementing some type of retirement system is a good benefit to make the job more attractive to the volunteer (P. 103). Some other recruitment and retention strategies

identified were: offering health insurance, tuition assistance, housing assistance, discounts incentives in local businesses, and health club memberships.

Another important factor identified was to implement fun into the organization. Today's volunteer fire service is a professional organization that demands many hours of commitment to training and emergency response. With all the time demands; it is critical for departments to incorporate fun and entertaining activities that involve the entire family. Some of the suggested activities listed include: pizza parties, fundraisers, Toys for Tots, health and wellness presentations, and getting involved in community risk reduction programs. These activities can stimulate a feeling of pride and value into the volunteer and family members (P. 115 – P. 117).

According to Gillespie (2012), as the economy continues to improve more baby boomers will be retiring. This will open up an estimated ten million jobs according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Gillespie feels the values are different between the baby boomers, Generation X (born between 1964 and 1977), and Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1997). The concern is how to groom quality candidates to lead the fire service into the future. Gillespie suggests taking the time to recognize and develop young talented people. It is critical to create opportunities for future leaders so they can develop their skills. He also recommends senior members share their experiences and skills to inspire future leaders, and not focus on the negative aspects of the job.

Fleming (2012) reported departments are having issues with recruiting volunteer firefighters, and once they are hired they are not staying. One contributing factor identified is longer hours being worked with the downsizing of companies. Employers are also less likely to allow their employees to leave work to respond to the local fire department for an emergency. It is also very common to have both parents working; family responsibilities are shared, allowing little if any time for volunteering. Training and education demands have also increased significantly, with

the volunteer force being required to spend approximately 100 hours in fire training and an additional 100 hours or more for medical first responders. The municipality will spend around \$7,000.00 training and equipping their new recruit. One chief stated he has not had to hire a firefighter since January 2009. He feels this success is due to carefully monitoring the moral of the department and make certain the new recruits know what the expectations are before they are hired. Another critical component identified for retention is to get the spouses involved because they are the ones left behind when the pager goes off in an emergency. It is estimated by the National Volunteer Fire Council that communities in the U.S. save over \$128 billion dollars annually from having a volunteer firefighter force. In these economic times this figure clearly quantifies the importance of taking care of one of the country's most valuable resources, our volunteer firefighters.

According to Troy, MI. (2012), volunteer firefighters are not compensated while they are serving on the department. They do however have a unique retention tool in the form of a pension or retirement plan for their members. To qualify for this benefit, the firefighters have to meet the following criteria based on their years of service and age as well as minimum participation standards:

- 10 years of service and age 55
- 25 years of service and age 50
- 30 years of service and any age
- Minimum of 15 hours quarterly totaling 60 hours annually for training
- Must attend 50% of the emergency calls they are available for

The pension is based on an annual amount and multiplied by the member's years of service. An example given is for a 50 year old with 25 years of service. They would be entitled to the base

pay of \$605.00 x 25 years of service, equals \$15,125 per year for life. There are other options available to the retired members to choose from on how they want to receive their benefit. The fire department currently has a 4.5 million dollar budget with a five year average of 12.2 career and 172.6 volunteer members. The fire department reports responding to 1,000 fire responses annually. A private provider is contracted to cover first responder and advanced life support for the 6,000 annual EMS calls. The fire chief feels it would be too much of a burden on the volunteers to try to cover the large volume of medical emergencies. They do, however, assist with EMS and technical rescue as needed, such as extrication for motor vehicle accidents. The current contract for EMS services is \$500,000.00. Combined totals show a five million dollar budget for fire protection and EMS; in comparable cities with all career firefighters and paramedics the estimated budget would be around 15 million dollars annually (Troy MI. 2012).

In 2004 a new program called Fire Corps was launched to attract community volunteers to assist departments with non-emergency functions. According to Fire Corps *Retention and Recruitment Guide* (Fire Corps, 2004), the volunteers are used to help departments by presenting fire and life safety education programs, attend community events, assist with fundraising and other non-emergency functions. This team effort allows the firefighters to spend more time on training and preparing for emergency responses. The guide also offers recommendations for recruiting new and retaining existing volunteers. Making a recruitment plan is the first critical step to ensure you stay on track. It is important to look at the makeup of the community and establish what the needs of your department are. This will help in formulating an appropriate plan of who your target audience will be. Some areas identified for targeting volunteers include: schools (National Honor Society), colleges, senior citizen centers, businesses, and religious organizations. Senior citizens typically age 65 and older are a great resource for departments to

draw from. The majority being retired offer a lifetime of knowledge in teaching, book keeping, fundraising, and many other talents that can be utilized to lessen the workload and time demands placed on volunteer firefighters. According to Fire Corps (2004), disabled people are often overlooked and are considered an untapped resource for volunteers. There are web sites listed in the guide to visit for more information on how to reach these citizens. Some key principles are identified to help the organization insure that the needs of the volunteers are being met. It is critical to be well organized so the volunteers have clear instruction on what is expected of them and what their tasks will be. It is important to make this group feel like they are connected to the organization and that their feedback is welcomed. The organization must provide specific opportunities for the volunteer to learn new skills, and to feel like their work is appreciated and will have a positive impact on the community. It is also recommended that a mentor be assigned to each volunteer. This will create a positive and trusting working relationship, giving the volunteers someone they can feel comfortable talking to with any questions they may have.

In summary, the literature review supported the issue of recruitment and retention of volunteers in the fire service on a national level not necessarily local to one specific region. The authors of the published articles clearly expressed concern with volunteerism today and in the future. The researcher repeatedly found time demands to be one of the primary factors for not volunteering. The days are becoming shorter as both parents are working and sharing the responsibilities of taking care of their home and families. The researcher found a seemingly endless supply of published articles on this issue of volunteerism. The good news is there are many resources and tools available to the fire service to use in hopes of reversing this trend.



### Procedures

The research for this ARP was focused on three questions: a) What processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on-call firefighters?, b) What types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on-call members to remain active on a long term basis?, c) What have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members?

For this ARP the researcher conducted a search on the World Wide Web on the subject of recruitment and retention for volunteer / POC firefighters. The researcher discovered many periodicals and publications on this topic. “Fire Engineering”, “Fire Chief”, and “Firehouse” magazines all had current articles on recruitment and retention to review. In addition, the United States Fire Administration (USFA), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) had research published on the topic of recruitment and retention of our volunteer firefighter force.

The researcher designed a feedback instrument (questionnaire) to distribute to area fire departments comparable to OFD. The researcher selected ten departments that have volunteer / POC firefighters. The contact information was acquired through a published list of fire departments from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce Web site. This information is available on an excel spreadsheet and can easily be downloaded. A cover letter was included with the questionnaire explaining the reason for the ARP and purpose of the research (see Appendices A and B). A mailing list was created for the ten departments (see Appendix C).

A second questionnaire was created on a web based data collection tool called Survey Monkey. The researcher is able to create the survey and provided with a hyperlink to send out via e-mail to allow the recipients to efficiently and effectively access and complete the survey.

When the researcher is ready, they can collect the data for analysis and create tables and graphs. This survey link was distributed to the 773 members of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO) e-mail tree. The purpose of selecting this group was to collect data on a national level to compare and contrast with data collected locally. The researcher is also able to examine what programs other departments are implementing to recruit and retain their volunteer / POC firefighters.

Limitations for this ARP were the low number of responses from the ten area departments the questionnaire was distributed to. The researcher felt this group may not be familiar or aware that recruitment and retention is an issue within their organization. Limited time as a volunteer or POC fire chief may also have contributed to the low response. Another consideration may be accepting the “this is the way it’s always been so if it’s not broken, why fix it” mindset. The limited response of 58 out of 773 NSEFO members was expected considering the survey was created to specifically target volunteer / POC firefighters.

#### Definition of Terms:

Combination Fire Department: fire department that consists of full-time and POC firefighters.

Fulltime firefighter: Career firefighter in the case of Onalaska, this firefighter is assigned to A, B, or C-shift and works a 56 hour work week. A typical schedule is 24-hours on, 24 off, 24 on, 24 off, 24 on, followed by four days off.

Paid on call (POC) firefighter: These members carry a pager and have a set hourly wage based on their level of training. They respond for emergencies when paged out such as fires, motor vehicle accidents, and EMS emergencies when initiated by the on duty crew in the event of multiple calls. They also come in for training, education, and other community events.

Volunteer firefighter: These members do not receive pay when responding to emergencies, training, education, and other community events.

### Results

For this ARP the researcher was able to collect a significant amount of data on the topic of recruitment and retention both in the Literature review and through two feedback instruments.

The following tables were created to show in chronological order the data collected from the two feedback instruments. Two tables were created by the researcher to examine the data retrieved on each department to include organization structure, call volume, population, and percentage of annual turnover in personnel. Table one is a collection of data from the questionnaire that was distributed to fire departments comparable to OFD in the Onalaska area. The researcher received four out of the ten questionnaires distributed from the list (see Appendices B and C). Table two was collected from departments on a national level by utilizing the NSEFO e-mail tree. The researcher collected 57 surveys through the Survey Monkey website and one additional survey was mailed to the researcher for a total of 58 responses out of 773. The foundation for this research is centered on the issue of recruitment and retention which is why the researcher felt it would be an important component for this project to quantify using a percentage the turnover rate compared to the size and structure of the department.

Table 1

#### Sample Survey Results from Comparable Departments

Please provide the following numbers regarding the structure of your department								
Dept.	Fulltime	POC	Volunteer	Fire calls	Medical	Transport	Population	Annual Turnover %
1	0	26	0	23	121	No	2500	8
2	0	26	0	31	208	No	7000	3.8

3	0	36	0	75	200	No	4000	11
4	0	0	32	77	0	No	4500	12.5

Table 2

Survey Monkey Results from NSEFO -N/R = No Response

Please provide the following numbers regarding the structure of your department								
Dept.	Fulltime	POC	Volunteer	Fire calls	Medical	Medical Transport	Population	Annual Turnover %
1	36	0	0	532	868	No	24500	5.5
2	53	2	2	1000	1600	No	33000	3.5
3	9	0	90	666	703	No	18000	10
4	36	0	12	2300	400	No	21000	2
5	35	0	0	51	2273	No	38064	2.9
6	33	0	0	254	4200	Yes	25000	3
7	1351	0	0	N/R	N/R	N/R	50000	1.5
8	8	22	0	650	850	Yes	4500	6.6
9	50	0	20	2100	2900	No	50000	5.7
10	30	14	0	525	1975	No	14000	6.8
11	130	0	0	355	8723	Yes	210000	2.3
12	27	13	2	798	862	No	15000	7.1
13	22	10	0	1000	1200	No	15000	3.1
14	36	24	0	250	2100	Yes	35000	10
15	86	0	0	3000	6000	Yes	119000	2.3
16	1	35	0	100	600	Yes	12000	2.7
17	130	0	0	2300	8200	Yes	122000	0.08
18	5	62	0	2400	2800	Yes	25000	9
19	7	25	0	280	620	Yes	3300	0
20	24	50	0	250	5000	No	50000	34.8
21	34	0	10	1734	548	No	36900	0
22	35	0	50	1000	2600	Yes	25000	2.4
23	23	38	0	500	625	No	19000	3.3
24	23	18	0	964	1334	Yes	34000	7.3
25	31	0	0	800	2500	No	15500	0
26	11	65	0	1000	500	No	47000	6.6
27	61	8	0	1780	5375	Yes	59700	2.8

28	24	12	0	725	1869	No	18000	5.6
29	10	40	0	300	900	Yes	12500	6
30	75	0	30	200	6000	Yes	72000	1.7
31	0	0	175	350	0	No	28000	14
32	326	0	0	8000	33000	Yes	199000	3
33	18	0	30	450	1250	No	15500	4
34	0	0	30	20	80	No	2500	10
35	141	0	0	2000	19000	No	110000	0.07
36	5	85	0	800	0	No	42000	20
37	152	0	0	2200	0	No	68500	3.2
38	38	0	220	1950	3512	Yes	150000	7.8
39	159	0	0	2850	13000	No	124000	0.06
40	880	0	0	13000	52000	No	905000	1.7
41	18	12	0	152	1521	No	11700	3.3
42	8	0	47	500	600	No	12500	5.5
43	12	0	832	1350	872	No	175000	17.8
44	13	8	16	456	143	No	28500	8.1
45	6	23	0	276	600	No	4600	34.5
46	4	0	30	180	0	No	5000	5.9
47	11	0	44	160	240	No	2500	27.3
48	498	0	0	10000	36000	Yes	280000	N/R
49	123	0	0	2303	4219	No	69900	1.6
50	154	225	0	7644	3131	No	262391	0.03
51	26	0	100	660	540	No	34000	7.9
52	20	11	0	500	0	No	10500	9.6
53	3	325	0	800	0	No	26500	3
54	18	0	25	630	100	No	12000	13.9
55	54	5	0	800	2000	No	32000	3.4
56	17	0	7	400	1400	No	13000	8.3
57	75	0	0	1500	4500	No	55000	1.3
58	12	32	0	460	2000	Yes	24000	11.4

Table one is comprised of volunteer / POC firefighters with an average annual turnover rate of 8.82 % for the four area departments. Table two is comprised of FT, POC, and Volunteers with an average turnover rate of 6.95 % for the 58 departments in the NSEFO survey. As compared to table one with no fulltime firefighters, results from table two identify 64 % of the

firefighters are FT. This could be a contributing factor to the 1.87 % difference between the two tables.

Data collected from the local survey conducted with area departments indicated 75 percent felt recruitment and retention was a serious issue facing the fire service. On a national level through NSEFO, data collected indicated an overwhelming majority of 87.7 percent felt this was a serious issue facing the fire service. These results supported the findings of the researcher throughout the literature review and personal communications.

The researcher felt it was important to collect and document what fire chief's and/or chief officers across the country felt were the primary reasons for firefighters leaving their departments. The following data was collected in response to the survey questions:

- Retirement
- Time demands for career and family
- Training requirements and recertification
- Better job or occupation
- Age and physical condition
- Not what they expected
- Moving out of the area

The responses listed identified one common issue that overwhelmingly appeared throughout this process. Citizens want to serve their community and get into the fire service only to find that the professional requirements for volunteers and POC members take up too much of their family time. This fact is especially recognized in families where both parents are working and responsibilities are shared between the husband and wife. According to Fleming (2012), training and education demands have increased significantly with the volunteer force being required to

spend approximately 100 hours in fire training and an additional 100 hours or more on medical first responders. It is also very common to have both parents working; family responsibilities are shared allowing little if any time for volunteering. Gasaway (2004) is concerned with the issue of firefighters leaving the job and urges fire chiefs not to lower the training and education standards just to get warm bodies. He feels cutting back on the hours will only make the problem worse and cause the members that are currently doing the work and loving the job to become frustrated and possibly leave the department.

The first research question asked what processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on-call firefighters. Data collected from the surveys provided the researcher with some good feedback for recruitment strategies to answer the first research question. The following is data collected from the survey instruments:

- Offering pay for calls and training
- Wrote a safer grant for recruitment and retention officer position. This person will not only benefit the combination department but will also recruit for the 11 surrounding volunteer departments that they depend on for mutual aid.
- Established a Recruitment Team to tell their department's story. This team shall implement programs that develop a quality and diverse work force in both career and POC membership. The newly developed team is currently attending career fairs such as: high school career day, military job fairs, college information days, and hopes to have videos produced to be shown in their local theaters and community television channels.
- Advertise on radio, trade websites and magazines, city website, and attend school career days.

- Junior firefighter program ages 14-17 for early interest before other activities capture that demographic. Open door policy for any other age group with interest in public service.
- Provide certification training that provides the volunteers with the certifications needed to work side by side with the paid firefighters in their state. Volunteers work assigned shifts and are treated the same as the career firefighters. These elements improve their marketability making them a good candidate for area career positions that may come available. They also hire any new positions from within their volunteer ranks.
- Nearly all positions lately are being filled by students from the local technical college.

Because of school issues, however, two – three members are rotated out each year.

Raw data was collected from the survey created in Survey Monkey for question seven pertaining to recruiting members (see Appendix D).

The researcher discovered through the literature review and surveys that creating a recruitment team will allow members to focus on promoting the fire department in many elements such as word of mouth, career fairs, utilizing the media to tell their story and educate the public on what the fire department has to offer. This team concept would work well by utilizing volunteer or POC members who understand the difficulties and commitment required to be a successful member and valuable asset to the organization. Gasaway (2004) believes fire department should get rid of dead weight and move on. This recruitment team could send that strong message that Gasaway talks about by seeking out and attracting the right candidates that are really interested in being a firefighter.

The second research questions asks what types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on-call members to remain active on a long term basis. The results from the survey instruments



gave some very good strategies to motivate members to stay long term. The following is data collected from the survey instruments:

- Minnesota has a Firefighters Relief Association to help retain its members. This is a pension program which rewards longevity. There are various plans, and payouts may be different from one department to the next.
- Insurance plan provided by the city; enrollment in State Volunteer Pension system; enrollment in State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association membership, which also provide additional medical and insurance benefits.
- New equipment to include class B uniforms for volunteer persons, portable radios for all members.
- Implemented pay of \$7.00 per hours up to NFPA FFII and \$9.00 per hour for NFPA FFII and above. By doing this, those who reach FFII status are allowed to back-fill a paid position as well as work a normal shift. Created an A, B, and C shift within the department to allow each group opportunities to handle different events. This gives them an important role in the department.
- We participate in a state wide Volunteer Incentive Program, which provides a \$3,000.00 tax credit on state income taxes when the volunteer meets certain criteria for training and incident participation. We believe that firefighters are motivated by relevant, realistic training. Training division prides itself in providing high-impact, high-energy, realistic training.
- We have competitive pay with state retirement and benefits.
- Provide a retirement contribution to collect at age 53; reward with apparel, uniforms, and insurance.

- Banquet, uniforms, tuition, meals at meetings, and as much recognition as possible.
- Deferred comp program where fire district matches what the volunteer puts into the program. Volunteers are reimbursed for expenses; this can total up to \$600.00 per month. State of Washington has a volunteer pension plan that the fire district pay into and after 20-years of service the volunteer gets approximately \$300.00 a month for life. Volunteers receive a \$1,000.00 tax credit for local property or vehicle taxes. For longevity provide a pension plan for volunteers which increases with their years of service.

Raw data was collected from the survey created in Survey Monkey for question eight pertaining to retaining current members (see Appendix E).

The results collected from the surveys identified similarities with what the researcher discovered in the literature review process for this project. Benefits such as pension / retirement, tax credits, recognition awards, competitive hour pay along with different levels of pay for training or years of service are all very good strategies identified to retain firefighters long term.

The final research question three asked what have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members. The first of the two research surveys was sent to area departments that have volunteer and/or POC firefighters.

Results from this survey provided the researcher with the following raw data:

Recruitment:

- Identify interested candidates with the correct motivational fit through reference of current firefighters.
- Recruitment is done now by word of mouth, website, and town newsletter.

## Retention:

- Service recognition awards for every five years of service (pin / plaques). Town funded length of service award (retirement) program.
- Pension program through the State of Minnesota which rewards longevity; amount paid out varies.
- Try to hire members that are not in the fire program, because they will be more likely to go to all the trainings and be easier to retain long term.

The second survey (Survey Monkey) was sent to the NSEFO members and designed to allow the researcher to collect data on a national level to compare and contrast with data collected locally.

The following raw data was collected on recruitment and retention from comparable departments:

## Recruitment:

- Videos, co-op work with community colleges, and SAFER Grant.
- Conduct an extensive community wide recruitment drive. Many of the new members are friends and family of existing members; this is to be expected in a small town.
- Applications are held so they can hire in groups which make training a team atmosphere among new hires.
- Fire prevention programs throughout the county.
- Offering pay for calls and applying for a grant for a full-time recruitment training officer.

## Retention:

- Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP), \$150,000 life insurance policy, mileage and meal reimbursement for shift. Volunteers before 01/01/11 are on the volunteer pension plan.

- Our paid on-call members receive a base monthly stipend, plus hourly pay. The pay scale has steps through 20 years. Also we pay longevity bonus based on length of service upon separation of service.
- Thru SC Firefighters Association we have a small retirement pension funded using Insurance Company's fund.
- New equipment to include class B uniforms for our volunteers and portable radios for all members.

The researcher discovered after reviewing data collected from comparable departments that most of them are using a similar approach as OFD to attract new members. The recruitment officer or team concept that kept appearing during this project would likely be one of the most critical components to look at. Feedback on the retention of members identified some type of a pension or retirement program to retain active members. Life insurance, tax credits, or other benefits such as those collected for this ARP may be the dangling carrot to help retain OFD's POC firefighters.

### Discussion

The purpose of this ARP was to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in comparable departments to Onalaska's. The research for this ARP provided the author a significant amount of creative ideas and concepts to address its organizational problem. According USFA (2007), in 2003 the nation's volunteer firefighter force accounted for 73 percent or just over 800,050 firefighters. In 1984, the number of volunteer firefighters reached a high of 897,750. To prevent from being forced to hire career firefighters, departments have to understand and deal with the challenges that volunteers are facing in today's world. USFA (2007) provides ideas and practice that can help departments reverse this trend.

According to USFA (2007), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003) cites the lack of time as the number one reason for not volunteering. Data from a study at St. Joseph's University in 2004 indicated 92.3 percent of volunteers leave the organization because they have no time to volunteer. Completing the top four on the list were: conflicts in the organization (47.8%), organizational leadership created an adverse atmosphere (46.7%), and too much training (45.6%). These problems were found throughout the 50 states and not necessarily in one specific area of the country (P.6). The results of the survey instruments also indicated lack of time as being the number one reason for volunteer and POC firefighters to leave a fire department.

Carter (2009) describes the lack of volunteer firefighters as a crisis, with too few joining and those who do, are not staying. He feels departments must attack this crisis head on to find out what we are doing right in our organization, and what needs to be corrected. Carter explains that after conducting years of research, he has come to the conclusion that the concept of volunteerism for a community is a lost tradition. Recruitment and retention are viewed by Carter to be two separate issues that must be attacked together. He recommends we fix any problems internally in our department before we look at recruiting new members. According to Carter (2009), it would be a waste of time to have an excellent recruitment program only to learn that internal problems are driving new recruits away. Carter explains it is important for the fire chief to establish a balance within the organization that works for his or her department. The researcher agrees with the importance of establishing balance within the department. No two departments are alike and each is dynamic with its own unique challenges. Carter also recommends forming a committee of members to study the internal issues within the department, and then look at the external (environmental) issues. This team, he feels, should work under the direction of a recruitment and retention officer to recommend strategies based on their study of

the fire department. Throughout the process of applied research the author has become familiar with the concept of developing a recruitment and retention team. The researcher knows the City of Onalaska cannot afford to lose any more of its current active and highly trained POC firefighters. It would be in the best interest of OFD's administration to empower a team of POC firefighters to research and provide feedback on what their vision of a retention program would look like.

If the findings of Gillespie (2012) are correct, the fire service has to retool itself to prepare for the retirement of the baby boomers. This will open up an estimated ten million jobs according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Gillespie feels the values are different between the baby boomers, Generation X (born between 1964 and 1977), and Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1997). Fire chiefs will need to figure out, within their organizations, how to groom quality candidates to lead the fire service into the future. Gillespie suggests taking the time to recognize and develop young talented people. It is critical to create opportunities for future leaders so they can develop their skills. It is important for senior firefighters and officers to share the strong history, traditions, and work ethics that they grew up with.

USFA (2007) recognizes the sacrifices that family members have to make to allow their loved ones to dedicate so much time to the fire department. It is critical for departments to incorporate fun and entertaining activities that involve the entire family. Some of the activities identified were: pizza parties, fundraisers, Toys for Tots, health and wellness presentations, and getting involved in community risk reduction programs; all can stimulate a feeling of pride and value into the volunteer and family members (P. 115 – P. 117). It would appear that the one annual awards banquet is not considered a fun activity for the entire family. These types of formal functions, although important to the organization, do not involve the children in OFD's team.

After conducting the research for this ARP the researcher recognizes that the fun factor is missing and picnics or other activities need to be implemented to bring the entire family together.

In summary, the researcher knows the issue OFD has is shared on a national level. The statistics are printed in black and white, with the problem clearly getting worse. Resources are available through publications such as USFA (2007) to provide critical components to implement into a recruitment and retention strategy. In addition to published literature, the researcher has collected original data from two groups surveyed to look at what comparable departments are doing to recruit and retain their members. The researcher has identified critical strategies to not only attract but also to retain its members for a longer period of time. In both the literature review and collection of data from the surveys, it is clear that the fire service needs to understand and meet the needs of its volunteers. First we must recognize and respect the volunteer or POC member's limited time. With both parents working full time jobs and trying to meet the demands of raising a family, we need to carefully look at how we can make our organization more efficient without sacrificing the training and education of our POC firefighter.

### Recommendations

The research conducted for this ARP produced results for the researcher to answer the three critical research questions regarding OFD's organizational problem. The literature review process along with the two survey instruments established a foundation to build a creative and effective program for recruiting and retaining its new and existing members. Based on these results the researcher will make the following recommendations:

- The researcher will present a copy and review the findings of this research project with the fire chief. A copy should also be presented to and reviewed with the Mayor of Onalaska.

- It will be the recommendation of the researcher to establish a recruitment team of four POC members to review current strategies and compare them to the findings of the data collected in this ARP. The team will provide input to the Chief and Assistant Chief to create a strategic plan for recruiting new members.
- The researcher will recommend a retention team be established to look at creating some type of pension or retirement program for OFD's POC members. This program may be part of a State pension plan, or a custom plan unique to the City of Onalaska.
- The researcher will recommend the training officer review the annual training calendar and identify the essential training and education requirements. It will be the recommendation of the researcher to limit any non-essential training, to allow POC members to spend more time with their family and taking care of responsibilities at home.
- The researcher will task the firefighters both FT and POC to plan out fun events or activities that will involve the department's entire family. The researcher will recommend the group schedule these events at a minimum of two times per year. The purpose is to show OFD's appreciation for the sacrifices family members make and allow them to feel like they are an important part of the fire service family.



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## Appendix A



## City of Onalaska Fire Department

415 Main St. Onalaska, WI 54650 • (608) 781-9546

[tgudie@cityofonalaska.com](mailto:tgudie@cityofonalaska.com)

March 5, 2012

Dear Chief,

I recently completed my fourth and final year of the National Fire Academy's *Executive Fire Officers Program (EFOP)*. At the end of each two week program, the student is required to complete an Applied Research Paper (ARP) that addresses a key issue or problem within their organization.

The research I am conducting is on recruitment and retention strategies for volunteer / paid-on call (POC) firefighters. The purpose of my research is to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in comparable departments to Onalaska's.

I would appreciate if you or one of your officers could take a few moments and complete the attached questionnaire. The information you provide is valuable to my research paper.

The completed questionnaire can be sent by e-mail to [tgudie@cityofonalaska.com](mailto:tgudie@cityofonalaska.com). You can also send it by mail or fax (608) 781-9514. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at (608) 781-9546.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Troy Gudie', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Troy Gudie

Assistant Fire Chief

## Appendix B

**Recruitment and Retention Questionnaire**

1. Please provide the following numbers regarding the structure of your department:
  - a) Fulltime / career members \_\_\_\_ Paid on Call members \_\_\_\_ Volunteer members (no pay for training and responses) \_\_\_\_
2. Please provide the number of annual calls for the following:  
 Fire \_\_\_\_ Medical \_\_\_\_ (Transport Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_)
3. Please provide the population you serve:: \_\_\_\_
4. On average, how many members leave your department annually? \_\_\_\_
5. From an exit interview or other feedback, what are the primary reasons given for your firefighters leaving the department? (Check all that apply)
  - a) Time demands for career and family \_\_\_\_
  - b) Training requirements and recertification \_\_\_\_
  - c) Personnel issues within the organization \_\_\_\_
  - d) Other, please briefly explain \_\_\_\_\_

---
6. Do you feel that recruitment and retention of volunteer / paid on call members is a serious issue facing the fire service? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

7. What processes are you currently implementing to attract and recruit competent and dependable volunteer / paid on call firefighters? (please briefly explain and/or forward a copy)\_\_\_\_\_
8. What types of programs or strategies have you implemented to motivate volunteer / paid on call members to remain active on a long term basis? (please briefly explain and/ or forward a copy)\_\_\_\_\_
9. Would you like a copy of the results from this survey? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
10. Please provide the following contact information for my research:  
Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Website: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

## SAMPLE SURVEY OF AREA DEPARTMENTS

ARCADIA GLENCOE FIRE DEPT  
JEFFREY P HALVOREN  
521 W MAIN ST  
ARCADIA, WI. 54612-1324  
(608) 323-7475  
[hlumber@centurylink.net](mailto:hlumber@centurylink.net)

BANGOR-BURNS VOL FIRE DEPT  
ROBERT W RUECKHEIM  
PO BOX 379  
BANGOR, WI. 54614  
(608) 486-4168  
[rrueckheimff@gmail.com](mailto:rrueckheimff@gmail.com)

CAMPBELL TWP FIRE DEPT  
NATHANIEL J MELBY  
2219 BAINBRIDGE ST  
LA CROSSE, WI. 54603-1356  
(608) 783-0050  
[nate@melby.us](mailto:nate@melby.us)

GALESVILLE AREA FIRE DEPT  
RICHARD A DOCKEN  
PO BOX 55  
GALESVILLE, WI. 54630-0055  
(608) 582-2326  
[gfd1300@centurytel.net](mailto:gfd1300@centurytel.net)

HOLMEN AREA FIRE DEPT  
DOUG SCHOBER  
BOX 92  
HOLMEN, WI. 54636-0092  
(608) 526-9363  
[dschober@holmenfire.com](mailto:dschober@holmenfire.com)

LACRESCENT FIRE DEPARTMENT  
JOHN MEYER  
315 MAIN ST  
LACRESCENT, MN. 55947  
(507) 895-2083  
[johnearlmeyster@yahoo.com](mailto:johnearlmeyster@yahoo.com)

LA FARGE FIRE DEPT  
PHILIP C STITTLEBURG  
PO BOX 9  
LA FARGE, WI. 54639-0009  
(608) 625-2185  
[lfchief@mwt.net](mailto:lfchief@mwt.net)

SHELBY FIRE DEPT  
MIKE KEMP  
2800 WARD AVE  
LA CROSSE, WI. 54601-7470  
(608) 788-1032  
[chiefkemp@townofshelby.com](mailto:chiefkemp@townofshelby.com)

STODDARD-BERGEN VOL FIRE DEPT  
JOSEPH W PFAFF  
188 N MAIN ST  
STODDARD, WI 54658-9801  
(608) 457-2118  
[sbfd28@mwt.net](mailto:sbfd28@mwt.net)

WEST SALEM VOL FIRE DEPT  
DAVID R MUNSON  
100 S MILL ST  
WEST SALEM, WI. 54669  
(608) 786-0111  
[base660@hotmail.com](mailto:base660@hotmail.com)

## Appendix D

### RAW DATA COLLECTED FROM SURVEY QUESTION SEVEN

- Implemented a Citizen's Fire Academy (10-12 wks.) to train new members up to Firefighter Introductory level for State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association basic volunteer firefighter certification. Also will train volunteer members to meet minimum Reserve Combat training for local department participation.
- Offering pay for calls and training. Applying for a grant for a full time recruitment/training officer
- Fire Prevention Programs throughout our county.
- We have attended the Fire 20/20 recruitment/retention workshop to improve our strategic plan. A RR coordinator has been asked for in the 2011 Safer Grant. This will not only help our combination department, but all 11 volunteer departments that surround our city that we depend on mutual aid. They too are in need of RR efforts. A meeting is being conducted to gain more knowledge and a better plan with those organizations.
- High-school based recruit school, utilizing a blended format of online and traditional learning. We have applied for a SAFER grant to hire a full-time Recruitment & Retention Coordinator.
- Our Department completed a Strategic Plan in 2011. The Fire Service leadership set Goal's and Tasks to enhance our fire service by establishing a Recruitment Team to tell our story. The Recruitment Team shall implement programs that develop a quality and diverse work force in both career and Paid on Call membership. This is a newly developed team and at this time we are attending career fairs such as; high school career

day, military job fairs, collage informational days, and in the future we hope to have videos shown in our movie theaters, and on our community TV channels.

- Advertise on radio, trade websites and magazines, also city website. We also attend and present at local school career days.
- We've learned the best practice is direct, personal contact to find those interested in serving. Our social media, website, and public relations articles do little (dare I say-nothing) to attract volunteers.
- Junior firefighter program ages 14-17 for early interest before other activities capture that demographic. Open door policy for any other age group with interest in public service.
- We offer any type of training volunteers want to attend. We pay them based on a points system at the end of the year to get a check the first pay period. We have a supplemental policy to assist with workman's comp.
- We offer short-term disability coverage to pay above what workman's compensation pays, we contribute to a retirement fund for all personnel, and we offer pay for any calls run with the department regardless of the type for all personnel to encourage participation.
- We are hoping to receive a SAFER Grant and we actively recruit with emphasis on our Explorer Post.
- Centralizing application process, which we hope will make the system more approachable by folks that do not currently have a connection to the FD through friends family, etc. And, hopefully address personality conflict within the organization.



- We do not have any specific program, when openings occur and a application process is initiated, applicants apply and a testing process is completed. There are certain application requirements that are needed for the applicant to be accepted.
- A lot of advertising on the web and in the street. For example shopping centers
- Currently we have not had any problems recruiting new members, thus we have not had to implement any formal recruitment activities.
- Deferred compensation, awards, LOSAP, higher education benefits, wellness benefits,
- We provide certification training in a rapid linear format that provides the volunteers with the certification necessary to work as a paid firefighter in our state. Our volunteers also work assigned shifts and are treated the same as the career firefighters. These elements improve their marketability in the nearby DFW metro area if they wish to pursue a career in the business. We also hire any new positions only from within our volunteer ranks.
- Tried to implement a volunteer incentive/retirement program but funds were not available.
- We have a waiting list and conduct academies twice a year. Many of our career personnel were volunteers with us at one time. Recruits volunteer in hopes of getting hired.
- Very little, we are holding applications so we can hire groups of people, make training easier and promotes a team atmosphere among new hires.
- Paid shifts, potential for advancement, potential for a career position.
- None; we are a great department with a great reputation. Word of mouth due to an opening in the reserve firefighter program will prompt 40-60 applications for 1 or 2 open positions. The existing reserves are offered the full time slots first. Thus no need to train,

process by vetting candidates since reserves are already trained and orientated into the system.

- members getting new members application provided to all who live in district and they must complete FF1 at our regional recruit academy active website previous mailings etc. did not work we have an annual high quality newsletter that goes to 9,300 single family residences
- Albany County has a recruitment and retention committee
- We have moved to looking at personnel outside our community to, collar community. We have not reduced our requirements for certification however.
- We hold an annual open house that we use to recruit personnel. This allows members of our community to meet us and see what we do.
- We don't have to recruit. We have a waiting list to join. We can't supply all the PPE and training due to budget concerns, so some people are put on a waiting list.
- We began recruiting statewide, which brought a lot of new recruits to the organization. However, over a year later, we are finding that most are leaving due to lack of participation. As the newness wears off, so does their commitment.
- Word of mouth, flyers to all the area departments, and current employees passing the word.
- We hold an annual session where people can get into firefighter gear, spray water, and use extrication equipment.
- The local community college has many FF/ EMTs waiting for an opportunity. If you allow them to live outside your boundaries you have hundreds of applicants.

- Our Department is staffed with 100% career personnel. Retention has not been a problem. People usually only leave due to injury or retirement.
- We do an extensive community wide recruitment drive. Many of our new members are friends or family of existing members, but in a small town such as ours that is to be expected.

## Appendix E

### RAW DATA COLLECTED FROM SURVEY QUESTION EIGHT

- Provide AD & D policy in addition to Workers Comp. Insurance provided by city; Enrollment in State Volunteer Pension system; Enrollment in State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association membership which also provided additional medical and life insurance benefits.
- New equipment to include class B uniforms for volunteer persons, portable radios for all members
- Thru S C Firefighter Assoc. we have a small retirement pension program funded using Insurance Company's fund.
- In our department, we implemented a pay of \$7.00 per hr up to NFPA FFII and \$9.00 per hour NFPA FFII and above. by doing this and allowing those who reach FFII status, they are then able to back fill a paid position as well as work a normal shift. We have implemented ABC companies to allow a smaller group to maintain training levels and assign them to that ABC shift. The company will then handle different events and allows the volunteers an important role in the department.
- We have initiated an in-house Volunteer Incentive Programs to reward participation in training. We also participate in a state-wide Volunteer Incentive Program, which provides a \$3,000 tax credit on state income taxes when the volunteer meets certain criteria for training and incident participation. One of the things that I believe motivates firefighters is relevant, realistic training. Our training division prides itself in providing high-impact, high-energy, realistic training.

- As a department retention has not been our staffing issue and our Strategic Plan has a goal to achieve this outline, but at this time the Recruitment Team has not implemented any tasks to tackle this issue yet.
- We have competitive pay scale with state retirement and benefits. We have various committees' for personnel to serve on to have input in how the department operates and functions. We have various specialty groups (swift water rescue, high angle rescue, Haz-Mat etc.) that our members participate in and we encourage certifications where needed and pay for their training. We offer Medical in-service training to keep members certified in their level of medical training.
- Small stipend program based on points for attending in-house and out-of-department training; providing stand-by coverage at events and returning to calls.
- Provide a retirement contribution to collect at age 53, reward with apparel, uniforms and insurance.
- Any suggestions you may find, please let me know as well.
- Retirement contributions and length-of-service awards to include a 20 year ring.
- We currently offer make-up training as well as alternative, incentive pay at Christmas, Accident Policy from AFLAC.
- None at this time
- Retention overall is not a significant process. We recently had 2 paid on call personnel retire with 51 total years of service. Other personnel who leave the service may be because of career employment opportunities or family commitments.
- Banquets, uniforms, tuition, meals at the meetings and as much recognition as possible.

- Deferred compensation (457) plan based upon years of service. FD contributes funds based upon sliding scale, and pays plan administration fee; FF may contribute portion of income.
- The volunteers are assigned to a shift and developed alongside their career counterparts. We have seen this translate into longer retention, even when the volunteer subsequently achieves a career position in another department.
- Reduced personal property tax on one vehicle owned by each volunteer. Free county vehicle license sticker for one vehicle for each volunteer.
- We offer a deferred compensation plan. Our volunteers are not paid though they are reimbursed for expenses. This can total up to \$600 a month. They can choose to participate in the deferred comp plan and the fire district matches the amount the volunteer puts in. In the state of Washington, there is a volunteer pension plan that the fire district pays into on their behalf. After 20 years a volunteer can get about \$300 a month for life.
- Nothing would be interested in your findings. Union activism is the main problem. The union does things to run people off in the thought that they will gain more positions. What they don't understand is that there is no money for more and I can double the number of part time people with the same funding as one full time person.
- We have participation requirements and if they have at least a year of experience and the proper certification they have chance at a career position.
- Reserve program means an eligibility pool of candidates that are constantly trained and called in to fill firefighter vacancies on shift due to vacations, sick, etc. The reserve firefighters know that an opening will prompt the senior members to get ready for the

impending offer. However, the reserves are evaluated each assigned work day, by their assigned company officer. If there is a marginal or unsatisfactory evaluation, the reserves will not be offered the position and if that reserve does not improve, they will be released permanently.

- LOSAP small amount for POC small amount for training hours small amount for bonus points for special projects the above is our Ponderosa Volunteer Incentive Program in place since the late 80's great insurance Houston Rodeo tickets and parking via lottery; 4 tickets per night Inclusiveness Stations 2 and 3 are pure volunteer all programs based on performance criteria that is not overbearing overall cost not counting insurance (some have 24/7 ADD) is ~\$120,000 per year
- We are offering more sleep-in or shift work for our members. Also, we have instituted a training budget for them to attend the same training opportunities as our career members.
- We provide retirement and life insurance to our members.
- Volunteers receive a \$1000 tax credit for local property or vehicle taxes. To increase longevity, we have a pension plan for volunteers which increases with years of service
- The only program in place at the volunteer level right now is a gas stipend for volunteers who reach a certain level of activity each month
- We were paying an escalating call pay starting at \$10 per call, increasing by \$2.50 per year capping out at \$18.75 per call for those here 5 years or more. We also have an "event pay" which provides \$15 for every two-hour block of activity not related to incident response. However, the unintended consequences have been that most will now only works if they get paid, also, some use this as their only source of income. This has

created many issues within the organization, where we have ultimately lost most of our members. We are now converting all of our reserve positions to part-time.

- The only thing we can give our members is pay and training.
- Benefits
- We provide subscriptions to a state firefighter association that provides some life insurance and disability pay. We have also discussed lowering a firefighter's property tax.
- Retirement/ benefit plans
- Retirement incentives both locally and thru the state retirement system
- Recruitment is done through collaboration efforts in the community, the educational system (ROP, Colleges), and Internet postings. Our department is very desirable and recruitment is usually not a problem.
- Our paid-on-call firefighters know that future full-time openings will be filled by current paid-on-call staff.
- Our paid on call members receive a base monthly stipend, plus hourly pay. The pay scale has steps through 20 years. Also we pay a longevity bonus based on length of service upon separation of service.
- LOSAP Program, \$150K Life insurance policy, mileage and meal reimbursements for shift. Volunteers before 1/1/11 are on the volunteer pension plan.
- N/A - phasing these two programs out